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RUEHGB/AMEMBASSY BAGHDAD PRIORITY 0225  
RUEHFL/AMCONSUL FLORENCE PRIORITY 1449  
RUEHMIL/AMCONSUL MILAN PRIORITY 7189  
RUEHNP/AMCONSUL NAPLES PRIORITY 1517  
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SUBJECT: IRAQ: ITALY CONSIDERING THREE OPTIONS: FULL PRT  
W/600-800 TROOPS, SCALED-DOWN PRT, OR COMPLETE WITHDRAWAL  
W/BAGHDAD-BASED AID PROGRAM

Classified By: DCM ANNA BORG. REASONS 1.4 B AND D.

11. (S) PolMilCouns met June 5 with Italian Defense Minister's Diplomatic Advisor Achille Amerio. Amerio said DefMin Parisi was at a two-day meeting of all Italy's ministers where Iraq was being discussed, and it was unclear what would come out of those discussions. That said, according to Amerio, prior to the ministers' conclave Italy was considering "two or three options" in Iraq, and much depended on what Allies told senior Italians in the coming days. The negative impact on Allies and Iraqis would be factored into Italy's decision. The options under consideration in rough outline were: 1) a full PRT with 600-800 troops for force protection (staunchly opposed by the GOI's far-left parties who agreed to be part of PM Prodi's governing coalition based on promises of full and immediate withdrawal); 2) some scaled-down version of a PRT with some smaller unspecified force protection element; or 3) a complete troop withdrawal from Dhi Qar province and a civilian assistance program run out of the Italian Embassy in Baghdad.

12. (S) PolMilCouns stressed the USG's expectation that Italy would fulfill its commitment to standing up a PRT with adequate force protection, and continue providing training, mentoring, logistics and commo support to Iraqi Security Forces (ISF) in Dhi Qar. Amerio replied that the Italians were well aware that if force protection levels fell below 600 they would be hard-pressed to keep the PRT. He agreed completely with the importance of assisting the ISF but was unable to give assurances that Italy would continue to do so unless the centrists in Italy's governing coalition could prevail on the far left to accept some level of Italian troop presence.

13. (S) Amerio noted that the new Italian government was committed to showing that its policy in Iraq was different from that of its predecessor, and that the centrists (including the PM, DefMin and FM) had to decide whether to go forward with the PRT and accept that the far-left would make a lot of unhappy noise, and possibly rupture Italy's governing coalition, or agree to the far left's demands for complete troop withdrawal for the sake of keeping the

government together. There might be a middle way, but if so, it was not yet clear what that would entail. He said he hoped DefMin Parisi would come back from the ministers' conclave with a sense of how much latitude the GOI would have in making its Iraq decision. We urged Amerio to have the DefMin share with SecDef in detail whatever options were still under consideration by Italy when the two meet at the NATO Defense Ministerial June 7-8.

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